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A Prisoner.—I really do not know, sir; but this I am sure of, that I am not catholic, nor one of my family.

Ordinary.—Were you ever taught the catechism?

A Prisoner.—I never heard of it in my life.

At this very time, I have thirteen capital male convicts under my care, twelve of whom are churchmen like those whom I last mentioned; and not more than four of them can read; the *thirteenth* is an Irish catholic, and is not acquainted with a single letter.*

If my memory served, I could quote hundreds of instances of similar ignorance amongst criminals. Can it be expected, then, that such poor untaught creatures can be sensible of the immorality of their conduct? Certainly not. I am positive the *rising* generation cannot be made more guilty than the *present*, by learning to read; and therefore I am for the experiment being made; but whether by Dr. Bell's or by Mr. Lancaster's method, seems to me of small consequence. Do but teach them to read, and instruct them in the *principles of religion*, and leave the event to the Almighty.

For the Belfast Monthly Magazine.

The following singular instance is extracted from Sir W. Meredith's Speech in the House of Common's, many years ago, as quoted in Montague's Opinions, Vol. 2. page 393, 400.

“WHEN a member of Parliament brings in a new hanging-law, he begins with mentioning

* Much has been said by way of reproach as to the deficiency in school-learning in the Irish. Here we have instances that education is greatly neglected in England—Imperial, assuming England! K.

some injury that may be done to private property, for which a man is not yet liable to be hanged; and then proposes the gallows as the specific and infallible means of cure and prevention. But the bill, in progress of time, make crimes capital, that scarcely deserve whipping. For instance, the shop lifting act was to prevent bankers, and silversmiths, and other shops where there are commonly goods of great value, from being robbed: but it goes so far, as to make it death to lift any thing off a counter with intent to steal. Under this act, one Mary Jones was executed, whose case I shall just mention. It was at the time when press-warrants were issued, on the alarm about Falkland's Islands. The woman's husband was pressed, their goods were seized for some debt of his, and she, with two small children, turned into the streets a begging. It is a circumstance not to be forgotten, that she was very young, (under nineteen,) and most remarkably handsome. She went to a linendraper's shop, took some coarse linen off the counter, and slipped it under her cloak; the shopman saw her, and she laid it down: for this she was hanged. Her defence was, (I have the trial in my pocket,) ‘that she had lived in credit, and wanted for nothing, till a press-gang came and stole her husband from her; but since then, she had no bed to lie on; nothing to give her children to eat; and they were almost naked: and perhaps she might have done something wrong, for she hardly knew what she did.’ The parish officers testified the truth of this story; but it seems there had been a good deal of shop-lifting about Ludgate, an example was thought necessary, and this woman was hanged—for the comfort and satisfaction of some shopkeepers in Ludgate-street.

"When brought to receive sentence, she behaved in such a frantic manner, as proved her mind to be in a distracted and desponding state: the child was sucking at her breast when she set out for Tyburn. Let us reflect a little on this woman's fate

"The poet says, 'An honest man's the noblest work of God.' He might have said, with equal truth, that a beauteous woman's the noblest work of God.

"But for what cause was God's creation robbed of this its noblest work? It was for no injury: but for a mere attempt to clothe two naked children, by unlawful means. Compare this with what the state did, and what the law did. The state bereaved the woman of her husband, and the children of a father, who was all their support: the law deprived the woman of her life, and the children of their remaining parent; exposing them to every danger, insult, and merciless treatment, that destitute and helpless orphans suffer. Take all these circumstances together; I do not believe, that a fouler murder was ever committed against law, than the murder of this woman by law. Some who hear me are perhaps blaming the judges, the jury, the hangman; but neither the judge, jury, nor hangman, are to blame; they are ministerial agents. The true hangman is the member of Parliament: he who frames the bloody law is answerable for the blood that is shed under it."

The facts stated in this speech prove, that the state is frequently more guilty than the wretch who offends against the laws. The insertion of it may be useful now when the public attention is in some degree turned to the subject of substituting certainty for severity of punishment.

A READER.

For the Belfast Monthly Magazine.

GREEN-GRAVES.

IT will gratify any person, who, from a motive of curiosity, can turn a little aside (about a quarter of a mile,) from the thoroughfare of business, to see a CROMLECH, or stone of worship, on the right hand of the road leading from Belfast to Newtownards, at a place called Green-Graves, and about a mile and a half from *Dundonald*, (so named, probably, from the sepulchral mount adjacent, the *mount* of Donald, a chieftain resting under it). This Cromlech, consisting of one large rock, supported on five others, smaller in size, two in front, of a wedge shape at top, and a third lying across the remaining two, upon which, and the two front supporters, the great stone majestically reposes, in an inclined position, as is generally the case, in this druidical monument. Though perhaps not the largest of many to be seen in different parts of Ireland, it certainly, on a *near approach* to it, has a respectable, not to say a sublime, aspect; particularly when accompanied with the ideas of great antiquity, great power in the construction, and a great obscurity respecting its original destination.

My Rozinante, who thinks as little of the past as he does of the future, and is now come to a time of life when he can no longer boast of any nice sensibilities, no sooner came within sight of the sloping stone, than, by pricking up his ears, and a sudden start, he roundly declared, that he had never met with such a thing in the whole course of his life; nor could my repeated assurances, that it was nothing but a stone, (such as *Finn Mac Coul* might have worn in his ring,) induce him to cross an imaginary circle, which